

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC ASSISTANCE; AMENDING THE NEW MEXICO WORKS ACT TO ENSURE THAT AN INDIVIDUALIZED EVALUATION OF EACH PARTICIPANT IS CONDUCTED.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

Section 1. Section 27-2B-5 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1998, Chapter 8, Section 5 and Laws 1998, Chapter 9, Section 5) is amended to read:

"27-2B-5. WORK REQUIREMENTS--WORK PARTICIPATION RATES.--

A. The following qualify as work activities:

- (1) unsubsidized employment;
- (2) subsidized private sector employment;
- (3) subsidized public sector employment;
- (4) work experience, including work

associated with the refurbishing of publicly assisted housing if sufficient private sector employment is not available;

- (5) on-the-job training;
- (6) job search and job readiness

assistance, as long as the department complies with the federal act;

- (7) community service programs;
- (8) vocational education, except that

vocational education shall not qualify as a work activity for longer than is provided by the federal act;

(9) job skills training activities directly related to employment;

- (10) education directly related to

employment for a participant who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency;

(11) satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalency in the case of a participant who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate; and

(12) the provision of child-care services to a participant who is participating in a community service program.

B. The department shall recognize community service programs and job training programs that are operated by an Indian nation, tribe or pueblo.

C. The department may not require a participant to work more than four hours per week over the work requirement rate set pursuant to the federal act.

D. The department shall require a parent, caretaker or other adult who is a member of a benefit group to engage in a work activity once the department determines he is ready to engage in a work activity or once he has received cash assistance or services for twenty-four months or as otherwise required by the federal act, whether or not consecutive, whichever is earlier. The department shall determine that a parent, caretaker or other adult who is a member of a benefit group is ready to engage in a work activity by conducting an individualized assessment of him. The department shall not impose a uniform time period for all parents, caretakers or other adults who are members of a benefit group to engage in a work activity.

E. The following qualify as temporary alternative

work activities that the department may establish for no longer than twelve weeks except as otherwise provided:

- (1) participating in parenting classes, money management classes or life skills training;
- (2) participating in a certified alcohol or drug addiction program;
- (3) in the case of a homeless benefit group, finding a home;
- (4) in the case of a participant who is a victim of domestic violence residing in a domestic violence shelter or receiving counseling or treatment or participating in criminal justice activities directed at prosecuting the domestic violence perpetrator, for no longer than twenty-four weeks; and
- (5) in the case of a participant who does not speak English, participating in a course in English as a second language.

F. Subject to the availability of funds, the department in cooperation with the labor department, New Mexico office of Indian affairs and other appropriate state agencies may develop projects to provide for the placement of participants in work activities, including the following:

- (1) participating in unpaid internships with private and government entities;
- (2) refurbishing publicly assisted housing;
- (3) volunteering at a head start program or a school;
- (4) weatherizing low-income housing; and
- (5) restoring public sites and buildings, including monuments, parks, fire stations, police buildings,

jails, libraries, museums, auditoriums, convention halls, hospitals, buildings for administrative offices and city halls.

G. If a participant is engaged in full-time post-secondary education studies or an activity set out in Paragraphs (9) through (11) of Subsection A of this section, the participant shall engage in another work activity at the same time. Additionally, for two-parent families that receive federally funded child-care assistance, the participant's spouse shall engage in a work activity set out in Paragraphs (1) through (5) or (7) of Subsection A of this section unless the participant suffers from a temporary or complete disability that bars him from engaging in a work activity or he is barred from engaging in a work activity because he provides sole care for a disabled person.

H. A participant engaged in post-secondary education studies shall make reasonable efforts to obtain a loan, scholarship, grant or other assistance to pay for costs and tuition and the department shall disregard those amounts in the eligibility determination.

I. For as long as the described conditions exist, the following are exempt from the work requirement:

(1) a participant barred from engaging in a work activity because he is temporarily or completely disabled;

(2) a participant over age sixty;

(3) a participant barred from engaging in a work activity because he provides the sole care for a disabled person;

(4) a single custodial parent caring for a

